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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1. Assassination of Hamas Leader Ahmed Yassin](#)
- [2. Mideast](#)
- [3. Iraq: Anniversary of War's Outbreak](#)

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio, followed by the other electronic media, reported that at around 5:30 this morning, Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, one of his sons, and some of his bodyguards and associates, were killed in an IAF helicopter missile hit. The radio reported that PM Sharon personally commanded the action. The station reported on a number of subsequent incidents in Israel, East Jerusalem and the territories. Israel Radio cited a gamut of responses to the action in the political arena, ranging from satisfaction on the Right to reservations, even condemnations on the Left. The station quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying that Yassin had been "the Palestinian bin Laden." Israeli Arab MK Ahmed Tibi said on Israel Radio that Yassin was more moderate than the Hamas leaders destined to succeed him. Some senior Labor Party members, such as Ephraim Sneh, expressed their satisfaction over the deed. Like many commentators, some Shinui ministers expressed their concern that Yassin's assassination will start a new wave of terrorism. Israel Radio and IDF Radio reported that the U.S. State Department is urging all sides to exercise restraint.

Yediot quoted PM Sharon as saying Sunday at his meeting with the Likud cabinet ministers that he will bring his disengagement plan for cabinet approval immediately after his meeting with President Bush. All media (banners in Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post) reported that at the meeting Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu set terms for backing Sharon's disengagement plan: all of the points of entry to the Gaza Strip must remain in Israeli hands; there must be a public and detailed U.S. rejection of the Palestinian demand for the right of refugees to return to Israel; and, the necessity to complete the security fence before withdrawal from Gaza begins, including building the fence around the Ariel, Gush Etzion and Ma'aleh Adumim settlement blocs, as well as around Route 443 from Modi'in to Jerusalem. (Leading media note that the U.S. has objected to the route of the fence dipping deep into the West Bank.) Leading media cited the disappointment of cabinet ministers on the Right about Netanyahu's view. Maariv quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying at the meeting that the evacuation from Gaza would increase terrorism originating in the West Bank. Yediot reported that Sharon decided to give up holding a referendum on the disengagement plan when he realized that legislative action was needed for such a move. Sunday, Yediot quoted Jordanian King Abdullah II of Jordan as saying that Sharon promised him Jordan would not be harmed by the disengagement.

Leading media reported that seven Palestinians, including a woman, were killed in an IDF operation Sunday. Ha'aretz and other media reported that more than 30 Palestinians and Israeli demonstrators were injured Sunday in clashes with security forces during a protest against the separation fence near the village of Harbata, north of Modi'in. During the weekend, all media reported that Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the shooting of 20-year-old "settler" George Khoury, a Christian Arab, in

Jerusalem's French Hill neighborhood. The Brigades later apologized for their "mistake." The PA also offered its apologies -- its Chairman Yasser Arafat did so in a personal call to Khoury's family.

Sunday, Yediot led with a warning by the GOI's anti-terror control center that Israelis should not travel to Sinai, Istanbul, and selected destinations in the Arab and third worlds during the Passover (early April) holidays.

Jerusalem Post reported that Sunday Hamas welcomed the PA High Court's decision to unfreeze the bank accounts of nine charities suspected of funding terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip.

Leading media reported that five no-confidence motions will be brought to Knesset voting today.

Sunday, Yediot reported that the sanctions President Bush will take next week, under the Syrian Accountability Act, are: a ban of flights to the U.S. by Syrian airlines; a ban on oil-related investments in Syria; and, a restriction of Syrian-bound exports to food and medicines only. Sunday, Jerusalem Post reported that Saturday Secretary of State Colin Powell reiterated calls made one day earlier by the State Department for an end to the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, so that Lebanon can enjoy "full sovereignty."

Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that the GOI was advised that an announcement will be made during Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's visit to Washington in mid-April that the U.S. intends to grant Egypt special aid and loan guarantees. Egypt will receive a USD 300-million special aid grant plus USD 2 billion in loan guarantees for 18 months. Cairo will be able to raise the funds in three payments on the American stock market. Ha'aretz quoted central region prosecutor Avraham Pachter as saying that the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services prevented a 1997 indictment of Eli Cohen, who, together with Avihai Weinstein, is currently under investigation (Maariv's lead story Sunday) on suspicion of selling arms to Iran, for selling armored personnel carrier motors and other equipment to Iran.

Yediot and Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF is holding in Tel Aviv a first-of-its-kind international congress on low-intensity warfare, at which Israel is presenting warfare methods it is using in the territories.

Sunday, Yediot reported that a U.S. court has indicted Leib Cohen, 70, from Brooklyn, on charges of illegally exporting weapons to Israel, including electronic equipment for Phantom aircraft and missile guidance systems.

Leading media noted that the two leading runners in the presidential elections in El Salvador, which are taking place today, are of Palestinian origin.

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[1](#). Assassination of Hamas Leader Ahmed Yassin:  
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Summary:  
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Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented on Ynet, a website affiliated to mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Ahmed Yassin died because he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword. In his death, he bequeathed us nothing but more death."

Block Quotes:  
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"Illogical Assassination"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented on Ynet, a website affiliated to mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (March 22): "Every Israeli, and presumably every Palestinian, knew that Israel would eventually assassinate Sheikh Yassin, and not only because once it tried to half-heartedly. The accursed cycle of terror and revenge, action and retaliation, had to play itself out. And since Yasser Arafat has already been expelled orally countless times, but Israel did not dare to carry it out, only the Hamas leader remained. After so many threats, after so many provocations, it was bound to happen. It was bound to happen because both sides to this conflict have long since ceased to calculate cause and effect, benefit and damage.... Yassin indeed 'oversaw' terror, as the

current IDF newspeak describes it. He gave instructions to try to increase or reduce activity at certain times. But the great contractors of terror did not receive missions and targets from him, and do not need him to act.... None of their capability to dispatch murderers has been impaired. This is known by every Israeli, including the IDF commanders and the political echelon that authorized this operation. But the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long since ceased to be about leadership and logic, control and decisions, cause and effect. This conflict is currently a tribal war, ruled by feelings of vengeance and inability to tolerate killing without reacting. Ahmed Yassin died because he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword. In his death, he bequeathed us nothing but more death."

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12. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It is hard not to conclude that Israel has fought the Palestinians for three-and-a-half years in order to return to the exact point at which the Intifada broke out."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "If anything, Sharon's plan is a reversion to a bastardization of Washington's historic land-for-peace concept -- land without peace."

Block Quotes:  
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1I. "Back to Clinton Plan"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 21): "Sharon's bureau chief, Dov Weisglass, told Bush's staff: '[America] has already agreed to the settlement blocs [to be retained by Israel].' But the Israeli plan can also be seen in the negative: if Sharon wants American recognition for the annexation of 5 percent of the West Bank, he is implicitly conceding the other 95 percent. His office denies this, saying that this will merely constitute the starting point for future negotiations, during which Israel will demand additional parts of the West Bank. But why would the U.S. agree to that in the future? It is hard not to conclude that Israel has fought the Palestinians for three-and-a-half years in order to return to the exact point at which the Intifada broke out. How else does one explain that after all the terror attacks, deaths, recession, reoccupation of the West Bank, and Yasser Arafat's confinement, Israel is asking for a renewed American commitment to the Clinton plan? From Sharon's perspective, American recognition of the settlement blocs is meant mainly to pacify the Likud ministers, who are demanding 'something in exchange for the withdrawal.' Bush's support is also meant to show the plan's opponents in the Likud that the American president does not view it as 'rewarding terrorism' -- a criticism that its local critics have frequently hurled at the unilateral pullback. But Weisglass's main job during his trip to Washington this week will be to obtain assurances from the U.S. that Israel will not be expected to negotiate with the Palestinians until they change their leadership and halt terror. In this way, Israel will effectively receive the 'long-term interim agreement' that Sharon has always wanted."

II. "Necessary Conditions"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (March 22): "The U.S. ... should not think of itself as an innocent bystander on whose lap a sticky plan has been dumped, but as a player whose many previous plans have come home to roost. If anything, Sharon's plan is a reversion to a bastardization of Washington's historic land-for-peace concept -- land without peace. The U.S. cannot complain that Israel has not tried. We tried Oslo, Camp David, Taba, and then we dutifully pretended, to this day, that the Palestinian Authority should be given endless chances to fight terrorism, rather than provide an umbrella for it. It is in this context that the U.S. is being faced with the demands of Netanyahu's rebellious band of Likud ministers: that the U.S. explicitly reject the Palestinians demand of 'return' to Israel, recognize Israel's right to permanently retain settlement blocs, and to temporarily control all Palestinians borders.... If anything, the Likud ministers should have made a fourth demand: that

Washington fully blame the Palestinian Authority for its failure to combat terrorism, and force new elections and drastic reforms by depriving the PA of the international funding that keeps it afloat. Israel's demands all go to quarantining a terrorist regime, not preventing one from becoming further entrenched. What is missing most from both Washington's and Jerusalem's thinking is how to transform the nascent terrorist state on the other side of the fence."

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13. Iraq: Anniversary of War's Outbreak:  
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Summary:  
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Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The enemy ... was intent long ago on fighting the West in its entirety -- first by dividing it."

Block Quotes:  
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"One Year On"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (March 21): "In toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, the U.S. sent the message that dictators cannot forever scorn the civilized world with impunity. This is what's called 'demonstration effect,' and the world is better off for it. The U.S. has also set in motion a mechanism aimed at delivering the Arab world's first-ever democracy.... Ironically, just as the invasion's anniversary came, Europe has itself been handed a 9/11-type of terrorist attack. Depressingly, many Europeans lost no time blaming their victimization on America, mentioning Spain's dispatch of several hundred troops to Iraq. Such critics would do well to recall that when America was attacked it had yet to invade Iraq and Afghanistan. The enemy, in other words, was intent long ago on fighting the West in its entirety -- first by dividing it. Here, then, is the challenge facing us all as we approach the next phase in the war on terrorism."

KURTZER